

MOUNTAINEER



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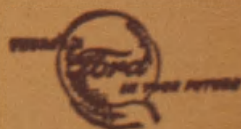
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About the Mountaineer:

The masthead of this issue of the *Mountaineer* indicates a part of the reorganization that has taken place recently. The editorial staff now consists of an editor-in-chief assisted by a fiction editor, a poetry editor, and their respective staffs. Material, which is submitted with no identification on the manuscript except its title but which is accompanied by an envelope containing the name and address of the author, is read by staff members according to its classification. Written comments are presented to the editor in charge of this classification and his recommendations to the editor-in-chief are based on them. Final decisions rest with the editor-in-chief.

Election procedures have also been changed. All officers are now

By MARY FRAN LAW

chosen quarterly instead of yearly. As before, no special qualifications are necessary beyond interest and previous experience with the *Mountaineer*, except in the case of the business manager, who must present an application for nomination.

Members of the editorial staffs must declare themselves at the beginning of every quarter to be on the fiction staff or the poetry staff or both. Interest and attendance are the only requirements for masthead recognition.

Our policy in the past of providing a medium of expression for those students of Montana State University who are interested in creative writing, will, of course, be continued.

MOUNTAINEERS:

MARJORIE BOESEN, poetry editor who will take over the duties of editor-in-chief next quarter, is a senior English major from Livingston.

MARY B. CLAPP, instructor in the English department and the wife of a late president of the university, is a frequent contributor to the poetry section of the *Mountaineer*.

With "When the Morning Stars Sang," REID COLLINS makes his third consecutive appearance. A sophomore from Great Falls, he is majoring in law.

DONNA COSTER is a freshman English major from Missoula. Her poetry was also published in the fall issue.

JACK DIXON is a MSU student who, for reasons approved by the *Mountaineer* staff, prefers to remain anonymous.

Fiction editor JOE GIONET makes his debut with "The Lost

Ones." A junior transfer student from Shirley, Massachusetts, he is majoring in English.

SHIRLEY HOILAND, Kalispell, appears for the first time with her sketch on conditions inside a mental hospital. She is a freshman majoring in philosophy.

A junior in the journalism school, FLOYD LARSON, Westby, is the author of "The Frontier: A History."

"As I Remember" marks the first appearance of PHILIP MAGEE, Butte, a senior majoring in English.

Known for his story in the fall *Mountaineer* and for his column in the *Kaimin*, CARROLL O'CONNOR wrote "Conversation at Bennie's." He is a journalism school freshman from Chinook.

TOMMY TOVEY, transfer student from MSC, is a junior from Ringling, majoring in Spanish.

mountaineer

WINTER 1949

Volume

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WISCONSIN

When the Morning Stars Sang

By REID COLLINS

BUT FOR the mysterious factor of circumstance, Draja Maser might be tending bar in a Pennsylvania coal town, or running whiskey into Kansas. And, had circumstance decreed, he might have followed the lead of Locke and Jefferson instead of Marx and Lenin. However, to question Draja Maser about politics or anything else, we would have had to travel thousands of miles last spring, all the way to Yugoslavia. And that's exactly what Peter Banks did do.

Pete? Oh, about six feet tall, brown eyes, brown hair—around thirty. His business? Well, last spring it was Draja Maser. Right now he's retired. Lives in Blue Island out of Chicago and he drinks the best stuff on the market. Pete believes in the capitalist system like you and me. And the system believes in Pete, apparently, because last spring some of its more affluent exponents looked at a map, made a few phone calls, and within three days Peter had made friends with a round little man in a small bar in Iowa. After some small talk the man displayed avid interest in Pete's Mediterranean service. . . .

"O. S. S., huh? That's great. All over Italy before the invasion? Well!"

Pete nodded. "Yeah, saw a lot of country."

"By God, I like you, fella. How you makin' out back in civilian clothes?"

"Not too bad, I guess. 'Construction engineer' on the business end of a shovel pays pretty good."

"Yeah, two more of the same. Now, Pete, you say you're diggin' ditches, huh? Hell of a way to treat a vet. Of course you're loyal an' patriotic, though." A snicker and Pete's friend took some air and waited.

Pete chuckled, too. "Sure I'm loyal. Everybody is when they're eatin' good."

"You're right, Pete. One hundred percent right. When they're eatin' good. An' a lot of people aren't gonna be eatin' at all before very long." A sharp nod for emphasis. "Those damn communists are encircling the globe, Pete. They ought to do something right in this country. But the worst one. . . ." He leaned close. "Pete . . ."

"Yeah."

"Ever kill a man, Pete?"

"Well . . . yeah, in the war. It's different then."

"You're damn right it's different then. And another thing—we're fightin' a war right now, and it's not as 'cold' as you think. But I was sayin'—Pete, if the worst enemy this country has was

to walk through that door right now, what would you do?"

"Why, I'd call the law."

"What if the law couldn't pin nothing on him. Then what?"

"Well, I don't know. On a battlefield . . ."

"Pete, the whole damn world's a battlefield now! And it's one big struggle for supremacy." Pete's friend drew an imaginary line across the bar. "You're either on one side or the other. A communist or a . . . uh . . . federalist. Now that's the way it is. And the worst enemy this country's got today is . . . Marshall Draja Maser!" He thumped the bar and stared solemnly into Pete's eyes.

"How do you figger—?"

"Figger it out! What's the big problem in Europe today? Food, of course. An' why can't we get food in? Marshall Maser. If he gets where he'd like to be, there'll be a war sure as hell. I know you seldom hear of him an' that's why he's dangerous. He's not the figurehead; he's the boy getting the orders from Moscow and he's giving them to the boys you read about. Now, if you met him on a battlefield . . ."

"I see what you mean . . ."

The man tipped forward on his stool, eyeing the crowd at the bar. Then, "Pete, how'd you like to make some big money and do democracy a big service at the same time?"

And that's how Peter Banks, loyal American, happened to be in Yugoslavia last spring; fifteen thousand in the First National back home and fifteen more when his trip was over, provided it was a success.

One would think getting into any European country might pose quite a problem. A problem, yes, but for Peter Banks there existed

one equation, one panacea for problems of that nature—the philosophy of government transcends the simple one of nature man?

And so it was in Yugoslavia the quick, hidden exchanges and long, tortuous wagon rides. A Pete jolted nearer to his fifteen thousand dollar destination, he wondered at the inane position of the world, hated the writhing ignorance of the stoic peasant who took his money and drove their wagons through the night.

* * *

Murder? Hell, no. Everybody got to go. Why not make it profitable? Who kills, after all Business, smelly corner grocery meats hanging naked on the hooks; cookies, candies—give Mr Baldwin's kids a sucker. She pays by the month. Sure, dad I'll help. Till when? But we go a game at five! Mark 'em down! Damn Safeway! Down the line sweep and push, get the compound out of the cracks. Business; red, black . . . not enough margin. My, God, Brown it's safe. I've known Jim for years. Pete, take this over to Hill. No no reply. Now, Brown, be reasonable. He needs it and he's good for it. Guts on the floor. Where? What a butcher! Clean out the tape, Pete. Then go home. The fiddle? Well, if you think so Flo. But, Ma! Now son, do it for your mother.

Security, son. Find it and keep it; take good care of your mother Business; find it and keep it. Buy it, sell it. Love and . . . No, they can kill a man here for business and never swing. Go back home Texas, this isn't your outfit. The hell, I'll kill like you, but I'm still sayin' they do it in the states bust a man flat—that kills 'im

Windows, bridges, deep water—they all kills 'em, but who done in the start? You ought not to talk it, Texas, even if it sounds the fact. Lost his ranch, huh? Well, he'll bear watching. Douse that match! Thirty thousand.

And Peter Banks marshalled hard facts of life to expiate for his business venture.

* * *

The wagon stopped. Pete stood beside a nodding driver, looking across a deep ravine in the high hills near Lescovac. Nestled in the opposite side lay the headquarters of Draja Maser, a former chapel now conspicuous with a radio antenna. "So that's it." He said the anxious driver and soon was standing alone on the edge of the ravine. He sized up the lay of the land and plunged down the descent, stopping only when safe from prying eyes from above.

Now on a level with the chapel, he felt in his coat and brought out a sandwich purchased from his last escort. His appetite appeased, he removed the coat and began tearing at a sewn place in the lining. In a moment he removed the long, blued barrel of a high-powered rifle; from his coat came the stock and telescopic sight. A few more seconds and he leveled the assembled gun in the direction of the chapel and scanned it through the sight. As the cross hairs swept to a window a figure moved within. A small adjustment; re-aim. There—one seated before a radio board, another stalking back and forth. One must be Draja Maser. Wait! Another one moving also. One must be—but which? Too long a shot, anyhow. Peter, the hunter, stretched out on the rocks; there was but one thing to do—wait until dark when he could sneak down the ravine and up the other

side. For fifteen thousand he could wait. He'd lain like that before, with the patience of one who knows the futility of trying to push time beyond its immutable pace.

The air and rocks warmed as the sun began illuminating afternoon. Far up where the earth, slowly turning, cracks and cripples in the frost, Ivan Raskov looked at that same sun and wondered when the night would come, when the bitter cold would dull the nagging pain and searing regret of thousands who had not really believed in anything, but who had been purged and plagued for reasons unknown and undisclosed. And Ivan's thoughts, looking at the same hard sun, wandered not to basic principles, but to immediate problems. Who might have saved food? How hard might he struggle to keep it? Waiting for the night.

A sweep across the earth's periphery Anthony Marcio tossed aimlessly in his bed, waiting. In the night he pondered the immense proportions of the test before him. With the dawn he might secure something also—citizenship in the land of the brave and the free, the United States of America. To think that such a land of wonder was to embrace him with its own—if! If he could but answer the questions; the flag, thirteen stripes, forty-eight stars, red, white, blue; the president, Washington, Lincoln. Waiting for the dawn.

* * *

While men quarreled, killed, slept, and loved, Peter lay quietly on his belly. Fifteen thousand—thirty all together. Money isn't everything, you know. Finer things in life . . . money won't buy. Damn few things. Ease, luxury. Soft, warm sands, swimming drinks of the best. Not the Seagram's Seven

or the American Bar. Good stuff; Old Grand Dad, Haig & Haig. Scotch is okay for the right mood. Whiskey. Damn wine; Sick on wine; kids should start on something better. Blackjack? Nope, the big tables. Hell yes, wear a tie if they insist. Kind they paint and rob you for. Helen can go by the bridge. There'll never be another Helen; lower income bracket stuff, though. Big money, not the thirty, but the kind it makes. Stocks and bonds? Let 'em cut each others' throats. Put it where you can watch it. *Security, son; find it and keep it. Keep good care of your mother.* Roses sweet red; heavy, heavy roses sweet red. Wax and still; that's not my mother's hair! The tax, though; they better not foul up. They said they'd fix it. No taxes, not on this thirty thousand. Why should there be? Patriotic; they oughta know.

There they are. Damn it, hurry up and get dark. Three of 'em. Take all three. Another fifteen; house and wife. Plan and work; get the best. Experiment, find the hottest of the bunch. Smooth-silk. Long nights and open red lips. Tongue, flat gut and long lean legs. Maybe with hose. Clothes, full bust, high tilted. Not like calendars, though. No kids; wait. *Three-thirty. All three.* Like the wop outfit, just to be sure. Could've sailed on without checking the bigwigs. Commies; red flags, ginger bread buildings; high towers cold snow. Fur collars, red faces, marching, points steel. The bomb? Mine? We'd win quick and easy.

• • •

Peter's stomach grew cold and he rolled over on his side. The day passed from flat light into deep curves and shadow, deeper and deeper until the black marched

over from the east and ate up the rose entirely, leaving night.

The hunter pushed his back from the rocks and sat up. Across the inky ravine two squares of light indicated the chapel's whereabouts. He opened the bolt of the rifle, shoved shells into the magazine, and ejected them one by one working quickly to make sure the action was smooth. Satisfied, he picked his way down the ravine slipping and stumbling occasionally, cursing invisible rocks.

Halfway up the other side he paused for breath and watched the shadow move in front of the windows. Once, twice, three times; regular guard on duty. He edged closer, never taking his eyes from the squares of light, pausing when the figure eclipsed them, hurrying when they returned. Twenty yards—fifteen—ten. He could hear their feet scuffing as they walked above him, steady, monotonous.

Five yards. The guard easily visible before the window. Three yards. Peter felt for the wire in his pocket, smooth and thin. *Quiet rushing sound; quiet.* The hunter rolled off the figure, slipped the wire from warm skin, and took more breath. The windows were directly above and he could see the rustic beams of the ceiling inside. Reddish light indicated a fire.

At the window; he slid up the wall, leaned away from the glass and looked inside. One figure at the radio panel. *Asleep?* Peter stared hard at the sprawled shape. He had seen dead men before, the abandon of positions, the rakish angles of bodies. So it seemed with the radio operator. Yet, it couldn't be, for there by the fire sat another figure, fondling a drink and lighting a pipe, his feet stretched toward the flames. *Fire! Fire on both of them and get out. No, make certain. No, wait! The fig-*

ire rose and moved across the room toward the door. He listened there and then opened it. Peter heard the sound from around the corner and crouched. Move forward by inches. He heard the figure walking around the building, moving toward him. As he prepared to lunge a voice chuckled softly in the blackness.

"Come now. My friend, you must be more sociable. Yes, you who slinks in the dark there. Won't you step inside and enjoy the hospitality of Draja Maser?"

Peter remained silent.

"Now, let us understand. I am unarmed. Observe." The shape thrust its arms above it.

Peter stood up and took aim. He paused, irresolute, and said, "Don't move or I'll shoot." It sounded stupid, something from a poor scenario. He walked toward the immobile figure.

"You see? You are in no danger. No one seeks your life as you do mine."

The hunter moved to where he could see inside the chapel. The radio operator had not stirred. "Get inside."

"Of course. These nights are hardly comfortable."

Inside Peter slammed the door with his foot and motioned his host to sit down. He walked over to the radio panel and nudged the huddled man. He slid awkwardly from the desk and collapsed on the floor.

"Have no fear of him, my friend. He is definitely dead. As a cook he should be more careful."

"What's the score? And don't move."

"I poisoned him. Had you waited, I'm certain your victim outside would have dropped also. A drink?" He motioned to a table on which two glasses and a bottle rested.

Peter hesitated. This was unreal, not the quick violence he had planned. He drew up the slack on the trigger and let it snap back as he walked to the table. "Come here. Sit down."

He seated the puzzling man and sat across from him, holding the gun above the table. For the first time he could see clearly the features of Draja Maser. A high forehead, steel-like hair, stocky build, eyes that might have been brown or black, and a thin, broad mouth. Before, Peter had been so certain of everything; now he wondered if this had been some mistake, some gruesome prank. "Who are you?" he asked.

"But, I introduced myself outside. I am Marshall Draja Maser. And you?"

"None of your business. I'm going to kill you." Again his words sounded flat, euphemistic.

The Marshall showed no surprise. "Of course. Naturally you are. For a vital gain the jungle murders constantly."

"What do you mean, *jungle*? This is Yugoslavia and no jungle."

The Marshall seemed amused. "This is Yugoslavia and, were it England, India, or Mexico, it would still be a jungle, my friend. When we abide by a law of the jungle, we become it."

Peter indicated the bottle. "What's in it?"

"Bourbon. I trust you are fond of it? Please have a drink."

Peter poured a drink and offered it to the Marshall.

"But you are my guest. It would not be . . . oh, of course. Poison, eh?" He drank the glass carefully and offered the bottle to Peter.

"Thanks. Good stuff. Now quit the horse play. What's the score?"

Draja's smile broadened to a grin, then to uproarious laughter.

"Of course, of course. I can picture it so clearly. The hunter approaching his prey, thinking it to be something strange and repulsive—a different language, a different manner. And I can imagine his consternation when the victim invites him into his dwelling and offers him the comforts of home."

Peter poured them both a drink. "Yeah, so it's funny. But it won't get you anywhere."

Draja's face tightened. "No, it isn't intended to. May I ask how much you will realize from my . . . ah . . . demise?"

"Thirty thousand dollars, in all."

"Enough, then, to make you comfortable. What was it? That song when I visited your nation . . . *Easy* . . . Ah, *Easy Street*. Now you will be living on that thoroughfare, *Easy Street*. Capitalism conquered!"

"What do you mean, 'conquered'?"

"Is it not true that you must vanquish, in effect, the system under which you live? Of course, you must surmount the barriers of your own principles in order to succeed." The Marshall leaned forward and waited eagerly for Peter's answer.

"Yeah, you're right, but that doesn't make the difference. The difference is that we have a chance of beating the game, and that's more than you offer."

"True, true. We have no game. However, I do not care to be placed under the classification of communist with the connotations inferred by you Americans. You see, my friend, I am interested only in the abolishment of the jungle. But wait, we are getting ahead of ourselves. You are not following."

Peter had another drink. "I don't care to follow. I've got a

job to do and I'm doing it pretty quick."

"I can assure you there is no need for haste. Your prey will be here as long as you wish, and without interruption. I urge you to believe that."

"And I urge you to jump in the lake. I'm not that big a fish."

"Fish—excellent example. What determines the types of fishes? I think they are born in salt water, then they must be salt water fish, the reverse being true of fresh water fishes. When you consider it, my friend, do not all characteristics governmental and social included follow the pattern of fish? Are the issues so great, then, in the light of fact? The fact being that we have little to do with our lives except live them as they are charted."

Peter smiled sardonically. "Tell me more," he said, at the same time relaxing his grip on the trigger. Something about the person of Maser . . .

"Gladly. Have you ever considered the time spent in each life to no avail? The time used in belaboring small problems, the solution of most of which lies simply in ignoring them? How the little children of the earth worry away their brief existences fretting about their loves, desires, and minute contingencies—all of which time rolls into illegible, forgotten protests. So it is with life." The Marshall lit his pipe again.

Peter watched him closely, finally asking, "But you've got to believe in life, or something. What do you believe in?"

"Nothing at all, my friend."

"That's a lie. Every man has convictions and so he must believe in something." Peter was plainly disturbed, never having given the matter much thought.

"Every man must have convic-

tions? No, you err. Name the conviction that cannot be altered by circumstances. We of the jungle are not so steadfast. And perhaps that is for the best."

"All right. You believe in nothing. Then answer how you got to be a big shot in your 'system,' and why you bothered."

Maser's lips curled again into a smile, a sad, thin smile. "One must do something with one's life." He paused and had more whiskey. "One follows the custom of the jungle. One must *gain* something, or so we are taught."

"Yes, but according to your philosophy, no one should have anything. At least he can't have more than anyone else."

"So it is said. However, I have seen the error of my ways. I repent—not for following a certain doctrine, but for following any doctrine at all. The law of the jungle still prevails, my friend, and it is stronger by far than any of the ephemeral rules we may invent. I easily broke one of those rules by poisoning my underlings. My own personal satisfaction led me to do away with those serving under me that I might find something out."

The Marshall got up and walked to the fire. "Constancy, fidelity. Those are the words of today. Yet, *each man kills the thing he loves*. And why? Because he does not love anything, my friend; because he *learns* to love through social custom, that custom arising when love was more profitable than hate.

"But where are the snows of yesterday?" And where are the answers of today?" He shrugged and looked into the blaze. "There are no answers, my friend, for,

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?

Declare, if thou hast understanding.

Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest?

Or who stretched the line upon it?

Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened?

Or who laid the cornerstone thereof;

When the morning stars sang together,

And all the sons of God danced for joy?"

Draja Maser turned and looked inquiringly at Peter Banks. "It has been a long while since the sons of God have danced for joy and the morning stars sang together, has it not? If memory serves me rightly, they have not done so in my lifetime." He sat at the table and lit the reluctant pipe. "Well, Mr. Banks?"

Peter stared into the fire and said nothing, while the mountain winds drew lustily upon the coals and fired them into white. He was thinking weird, fantastic thoughts; the chain of events behind lay before the fire mute and distinct, immutably past and terribly present.

While he thus stared, Ivan Rasikov huddled shaking in the dark cold, clutching to his breast a green-smudged piece of bread, not thinking at all of the glory of possession, only worrying lest someone else discover him with food and take it from him. But the night harbored only the sobs and sighs of other animals huddled together, afraid of the dark and hating the dawn.

Across the sphere the sun shone upon Anthony Marcio as he stood upon the clean, pink steps of the Federal building. He, too, clutched possession to his breast, the precious papers of citizenship in the United States of America. Mr. Marcio returned the smiles of his

amused compatriots; then he embraced the air and walked into his land.

And so it was with the earth, each enjoying the light, or hating it; loving the night, or fearing it, as Peter sat silently with Marshall Maser, thinking new thoughts and sharing feelings with no one on the face of earth.

"My friend, you are silent. What is it that should deter you from your purpose? In your country as in mine, thirty thousand units of exchange would be welcome." Maser smiled wryly.

Peter deserted his thoughts and stared at the outline of humanity across the table. "I'm going to kill you," he said evenly. "I'm still not sure what you're pulling, but I'm going to do what I came for."

Maser lifted one eye brow and nodded. "Of course. And when you have, what will you have accomplished? My friend, will you have serviced the state as well as yourself?"

Peter weighed the answer and replied, "Naturally. If you were to exterminate one of our general staff, wouldn't you have serviced your state?"

"Indeed, in the eyes of my superiors, as in the eyes of yours, I would have done my duty."

"It isn't my duty, exactly. It's something to be done for people everywhere."

"For people everywhere," echoed Maser. "And your making money has nothing to do with it? That is to say, it is more practical to realize something from the answer to duty?"

"Yes," exploded Peter. "You're goddamn right it is. Why not? When you live in a country you play by its rules. Our rules are free enterprise and competition—

and that's what this is too, an enterprise."

Maser spread his hands in protest. "But no. You are doing service, a duty. Can that be an enterprise? Can that be competitive? With whom are you competing? If someone else were vying for the money, how would you cope with him? Yes, I'll ask you—how would you cope with a fellow citizen if you discovered him here trying to get the business done before you?" He smiled and settled back. "Which would be the stronger then, enterprise or duty?"

"The whole thing's silly," Peter poured another drink and looked again into the fire. "I'm going to kill you, Maser. On your own principles I'm going to do it. According to you, if killing accomplishes the end you're seeking, then it's right, isn't it?"

This time it was Maser who waited, and then, "Yes, that would be right, my friend, according to our principles. Utility, practicality. These are the bywords and had I remembered them, you would be yourself with 'yesterday's seven thousand years.'"

Peter stared across the table into the barrel of an automatic pistol pointed at his stomach—too late to swing his rifle around. He looked at the smiling features of his host. "Yeah, you're sharp, just like all the rest."

"You expect to be killed now, don't you?" asked Maser slowly. "Just like the jungle. You forgot to be vigilant and now you have lost to the vigilant one." The Marshall stood up and backed to the fireplace. "If I may digress, my friend; had I followed my own rules of the jungle, I would be secure. But I did not. You see, the hierarchy of my system cannot tolerate squeamishness or deviation

from practicability. Had I followed orders from intelligence, you would have been eliminated upon entering Area 9, a district in which you have roamed unmolested for three days. That you may hear me out, I suggest you dispose of that rifle."

Peter let the weapon clatter to the floor. He sat stiff and anticipating. "Make it snappy, will you?"

Maser ignored the request. "Continuing, I have received word that I am to be relieved of my command and am to report back to Moscow. In your country that would mean chastisement of a verbal nature; in mine it will mean punishment severe and physical—practical punishment." He lowered the pistol and walked to the window, leaving Peter calculating, waiting for the moment to dive for the rifle.

"Soon it will be light. Soon the morning stars will appear and dance for us once more, my friend." He stood before Peter, the pistol held limply at his side. "Forget the jungle for a moment. Forget about leaping upon me, wresting this gun from my grasp."

He sat once more across the table, the pistol gleaming in the wavering light. "I am not going to kill you, Peter Banks. Why should I? Practically speaking, selfishly speaking, I shall have no benefit from your death, for mine is soon to follow. Life, my friend, is a commodity, after all. If I may preserve that commodity, then that is practical, is it not?"

Peter stared in amazement at the placid figure of his enemy. "Why?" he whispered. "Why should you? I am an enemy of your nation. I . . . I may someday take arms against it."

"Yes, you may." He lowered his head, pushed his hands into his

checks. "And someday you may be fighting on our side—against whom God only knows. Impossible? Now it seems so. Did it not seem fantastic that the Fascist and Nazi nations would one day be affiliated with you? Did it not seem foolish, years ago, that you would one day regard us as enemies? Indeed, life is too much with us. The theories, principles that one day are inviolable become impossible with the next day's events. And yet, my friend, the waking world thinks of nothing but today; the sleeping portion dreams of nothing save the exigencies of the morning. A microcosm enslaving itself!" He looked softly at Peter. "Why do I speak this way? Because, my friend, in the nearness of death one can divorce oneself from today. The questions glittering in the back of the living mind can become ponderous, gleaming figures crowding out today when one is about to leave the shadow shapes.

"Look outside. Observe the gray-blue of another day. Along the length of man-made meridians the little children prepare to begin again, to wrestle with their lives the same as yesterday. But for me, 'sans wine, sans song, sans singer and—sans end'!"

Peter glanced at the piece of mental easily within his reach. "I think you're crazy. Why did you let me get this far if you knew what would happen?"

"I wanted to talk with you—to see what motives inspire murder in the hearts of men in the jungle."

"Well, have you found out anything?"

"There is no such thing as finding out completely. Your side of the jungle is the same as ours. To my own satisfaction I know what sent you here; however, there is a mean for inquiry also. There is a

different answer for different men."

"But why not kill me and escape?"

"Escape to what? In the middle of life there is no escape, no resolution; only compromise. There comes a time when, practically speaking again, the advantages of death outweigh those of life. And this you must also hear, if remembering nothing else; *the advantages of death will soon be added to.*"

Marshall Maser's face looked old and ill as he filled his glass. He moved slowly, inexorably, lifting the liquid to his lips. "To a solu-

tion, my friend, a solution to everything assailing humanity; to capitalism, communism, anarchism, Catholicism, Protestantism, atheism. In short, to the distant day when the morning stars sing together and all the sons of God dance for joy."

The biting cold and craggy ravine absorbed a muffled report issuing from the converted temple of worship. A moment later Pete Banks was scrambling up the mountainside in the half-light of dawn, slipping and cursing the dew and dampness, while the stars gazed down upon the earth, hard and silent in their settings.

Lost Kingdom

By MARJORIE BOESSEN

The wind drives down
 In one rash breath of revelation
 The golden gown,
 Leaves nude and brown
 The tree, the dancing lithe Egyptian.
 With fallen robe about her feet,
 One golden ring left in her ear
 She trembles, knows herself temptation,
 Looks at the king with fear.

His head a-whirl
 With colors mad and slavish graces
 With sudden furl
 Of fan of pearl
 He halts the sweet oil-scented mazes.
 Too old for youth-enhanced lust,
 Unmindful of the silence left,
 Uncaring of the pleading faces,
 Knows only his own soul bereft.

The *Frontier*: A History

By FLOYD G. LARSON

LITERARY movements are often associated with individuals—realism with Tolstoy and naturalism with Zola—but in regionalism the little magazines rather than single men dominate the movement.

These little magazines, a part of the revolt against the domination of themes and techniques by the eastern publishers, seek to keep the writer in his own region for a while before he is drawn east to central literary markets. Not only do they encourage writing which breaks away from the standard formula of rising action, good versus bad, obvious climax, and denouement, but they also provide a place of publication for stories in which virtue does not always triumph, nor characters live happily ever after.

In the regional movement, which reached its highest point between the two world wars, one of the outstanding little magazines was Dr. Harold G. Merriam's *Frontier*. This publication was started in 1919 by Dr. Merriam and a class in creative writing at Montana State University, under the title, *Montana*, which was changed in the second issue to *Frontier*. For several years it remained an unofficial campus publication, using articles and stories written primarily by students, and soon began receiving praise throughout the na-

tion for the honesty of its writing.

In November of 1927 the *Frontier* became regional. It initiated its new policy with an issue of seventy-six pages, which contained writing by eight Montana authors and one from Denver. Among them were Frank B. Linderman, who later wrote the *Kootenai Why Stories*, *Old Man Coyote*, and *American*, the biography of an Indian chief; and John R. Barrows, whose story about life in central Montana during the 1880's subsequently became part of his book, *Ubet*. To preserve unpublished diaries and journals about the old West, the magazine started in this issue a historical section, later edited by Paul C. Phillips, professor of history at Montana State University. Most of the material that went into this section has been deemed so valuable to historians that the University has reprinted it in a pamphlet titled *Sources of Northwest History*.

By 1930, the magazine was receiving articles and stories from Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Wyoming, and some eastern states. The book review section had become recognized as a reliable source of comment on new books on western themes. In physical appearance the *Frontier* symbolized the dual geographical nature of the region it represented, with a dark green cover suggestive of pines

and firs for the mountain sections and an illustration of a charging buffalo for the eastern plains area.

When the *Midland*, published by John T. Frederick at the University of Iowa and later at the University of Chicago, suspended publication in June of 1933, the *Frontier* took over its subscription list and with the November issue in that year became known as the *Frontier and Midland*. Although the magazine never lacked friends or support, Dr. Merriam decided to suspend publication in 1939. If certain difficulties can be overcome, it may soon be published again under university sponsorship.

Although the magazine didn't judge material by conventional standards of larger magazines, it did not choose its contents haphazardly. The twenty to twenty-five stories and articles that were printed each year represent the best of the fifteen hundred or more submitted. This large number of manuscripts is also remarkable because they were submitted on a non-payment basis. During its entire existence, the *Frontier* never paid an author for his work, except to pass on the money it received for articles when they were reprinted by other magazines. The editor and his assistants received no payment either. Many students, however, helped support themselves in college by working as managers on a commission basis. Since the *Frontier* was not an official publication of the university, it received no aid from the university except stenographic help. Throughout its twenty years of existence it was Dr. Merriam's magazine and his responsibility.

Its reputation as a part of the literary history of the Northwest is firmly established. The *Literary*

Supplement of the *London Times* printed critical reviews of it on three different occasions. Parts of the magazine have been included in Joseph Kinsey Howard's *Montana Margins*. Almost every volume of E. J. O'Brien's twenty best short stories of the year from 1921 until the *Frontier* ceased publication included selections from it. In twenty years the magazine had risen from a humble class project to a nationally and internationally recognized regional magazine.

Dr. Merriam never lost sight of the possibilities for regional writing about the Pacific Northwest, the youngest section of the United States. His theories on regionalism, which have been widely quoted and reprinted, are discussed at great length in a book on the little magazines of the twenties and thirties, *The Little Magazine, A History and Bibliography* by Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich. A summary of his ideas of the purpose of regionalism and the *Frontier* appeared in the May, 1934, issue of the *New Mexico Quarterly* in an article entitled, "Expression of Northwest Life," in which Dr. Merriam said: "I should like to have writers understand regionalism not as an ultimate in literature but as a first step, as the coming to close knowledge about the life of the region in which he lives is a first necessity for sound writing, even as knowledge of oneself—'know thyself'—is also a first necessity. The 'universal' when healthy, alive, pregnant with values, springs inevitably from the specific fact. This conception of the interpenetration of life I would oppose to the idea of cosmic-minded people that understanding springs from abstract ideas and images in the mind—in the soul. To such extent regionalism in my judgment is earth minded."

In this quotation lies Dr. Merriam's answer to many of regionalism's critics. They argue, with some validity, that writing limited by external facts of a region may lack universal scope and meaning, but, as Dr. Merriam points out, regionalism is not the end but the first step toward that end—universality. Other critics accuse the regionalist of living in the past and ignoring change. Since the regionalist seeks to know his region, he cannot be content with a mere appraisal of things as they appear today but must find out how they came to be, why they are, what they are, and what they once were if he is to achieve the understanding of the region in a scope big enough to embrace truth. For

truth is the objective of regional writing.

The place of regionalism in our literature is then like the primary school in which the writer can learn the ABC's of a broader form of writing that more nearly approaches the universal. Willa Cather's *O Pioneers* is a regional work, but she later wrote novels which have a universality that has appeal beyond geographic areas. Regionalism has its place in literature and the little magazines like the *Frontier* are a part of it. The quotation on the *Frontier's* title page expresses the spirit of regionalism and the *Frontier's* role in the movement: "The frontiers are not east or west, north or south, but wherever a man fronts a fact." —Thoreau.

A Time and a Place

By TOMMY TOVEY

A thing must be done at a time and a place
No future date nor far-off land will do
It could be any time or any place
But that depends on you.

A time may come—like circumstance
But then the scene is wrong
Or you may have the place you want
To find that time has gone.

The Lost Ones

By JOSEPH E. L. GIONET

A CANDLE on a table to the left of the door lighted the room. The room was square and large enough to accommodate a squad of sleeping men. The shadowy walls were of rough grey-brown stone. The floor was of stone, too, but it was almost covered with dry, powdery dirt. A blanket hung over the door and another covered the small window at the farther side. A man dressed in khaki and wearing a British helmet cocked to one side sat at the table examining a heavy black revolver. In the corner behind him was a small pile of rifles and equipment-laden cartridge belts. A heavy-set man in the same uniform stood at the right of the door and a younger slim man in the opposite corner. They were armed with rifles. Along the right side, four men sat on the floor.

One was bare headed and wore the British bush jacket. The faces of the others were shaded by Bedouin scarves that draped their necks.

The flame of the candle flickered and the shadows shimmered on the floor and walls as the blanket covering the doorway was swung silently aside. A man of average height, heavy shouldered, entered the room. His khaki trousers were tucked into low,

laced boots. A knife and a pistol hung from the cartridge belt that was buckled tight across his hips. From under a black beret his narrowed eyes swept the walls and the men at a glance. Stepping before the man at the table he slung his Schmeizzer sub-machine gun. He drew out a package of cigarettes and offered one.

"The outpost is set, Yolich," he said in Hebrew. "The four men cover all approaches."

"Good," Yolich said in the same language. He accepted the cigarette and said, "Thank you, Roche." His face looked dark and narrow when the shadows accentuated his sharp features as he lighted his cigarette from the candle.

"It is a very dark night," Roche said. He turned from the glare of the candle and asked, "How many prisoners?"

"Four."

Roche stepped closer to the prisoners. "Did you get anything out of them?"

"No. Arab pigs!" Yolich pointed to the prisoner wearing the bush jacket. "That one. He is English. Question him, Roche."

"English?" Roche said. He unslung his Schmeizzer and laid it on the table. He commanded the prisoner in English, "On your feet."

The prisoner stood up. He was a tall, slim man with light, wavy hair. His bush jacket was open and the pockets were unbuttoned showing they had been searched.

"Your name," Roche snapped.

"John."

"Snap out of it. God damn it. John who?"

"John. That's all."

"Rank?" Roche asked without hesitation.

"Does that make a difference, too?"

"You son of a bitch. Want a slug in your gut?"

"That's what I'll get anyway. Ain't it, Yank?"

Roche turned to Yolich and said in Hebrew, "He will not talk."

Yolich nodded toward the guard by the door. The guard grinned and his teeth showed white in the candle light.

"That will not do any good," Roche said. "He is British." He looked up into the prisoner's face and his eyes narrowed as he drew slowly on his cigarette.

He turned back to Yolich. "He will not talk. He is a trained soldier. Experienced."

The guard's grin faded and he looked sullen. He stared at the Englishman. The Englishman stood silent. The candle made light shadows of lines from the sides of his nose to the corners of this mouth. He sat down as Roche motioned with his hand and went back to Yolich.

"When do we return?" Roche asked.

"Maax should report within ten minutes. If he says the way is clear, we go then. You agree?"

"Yes," Roche agreed.

Roche unslung the ammunition pouch from his shoulder and placed it by the Schmeizzer on the

table. "I am going to talk to the Englishman," he said.

"Go and talk. It will do you good, Roche," Yolich said. "Relax. You do not talk enough."

"You're the first Britisher I run into," Roche said in English to the prisoner.

"There are a few of us. You're the first American I've met in Palestine."

"Where did you run into Americans before?"

"In Europe."

"Where in Europe?"

"Normandy. Holland."

"I was there. Both places. 101st Airborne Division."

"You were? My regiment, tanks, was with your outfit for a short time in Holland," the Englishman said.

"Which regiment were you with? Ours, I mean."

"The 501st Parachute Infantry, I believe."

"God damn, that was my outfit," Roche said. "Now, that's something. Were you with that unit of tankers that helped us out in that village—I've forgotten the name now—a little village in a bend of the canal. The Jerries had infiltrated on the left flank and almost cut us off."

"No, I wasn't in that one," the Englishman said. "But, say, I do remember that. A hot time they had there."

"I'll say. That was a bitch. My platoon—I was first lieutenant then—we got it pretty bad," Roche said. "You were in that outfit, you say?"

"Yes."

"John, it's a shame that this isn't a bar," Roche said, half smiling. "I'd like to drink to that night."

"Say at a sidewalk cafe in Montmartre?" the prisoner said.

Roche grinned. "The sun's getting you."

"Just a minute," Roche said. He went up to Yolich and said, "Maox should be back by now."

"Yes," Yolich said.

"But they would not take Maox without a fight."

"No. Maox will return."

Roche took his Schmeizzer from the table. He removed the magazine and depressed the top cartridge a few times. Replacing the magazine, he set the weapon back on the table. He put his hands in his pockets and stood there for a moment.

"I'll tell you what, John," he said. "If you give me your parole—you're not in the British army any more, you know—you might find it more comfortable during your stay with us."

"Come, Yank. I know your playmates too well. I have no word for them."

"Seriously, though," Roche said, "give your word to me and I'll see that you get to a rear echelon stockade safely. Once there, you're all set. In the meantime it'll make it easier for all concerned."

"Very well. You have my word."

"Good," Roche said. To Yolich he said, "I have his parole."

Yolich nodded.

"Let's get away from these filthy bastards," Roche said to his prisoner. "Sit against this wall."

They sat down a few paces from Yolich. The guards looked at Yolich. He nodded.

"You can't really blame these boys for being rough on Englishmen," Roche said. "It's not very encouraging to keep running into British guns and tanks manned by Arabs to say nothing of British army officers leading them. These

boys find it tough to get a country to supply them."

"Get this straight, Yank," the prisoner said. "Here's one chap who may be a British subject but he's not under the British army."

"Well, God damn. What are you doing here?"

"What are you doing here?"

"Yeah. Guess you're right."

The Englishman flicked his cigarette ashes. "It's one way to gather a few coins," he said.

"Like jump pay, huh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm not getting paid bad," Roche said. "I plan and execute these jobs under the C. O. here. He sits back and takes in the glory. He's not a bad guy, though. I wish to hell they'd let me take a command of my own."

"You Yanks didn't stop bitching with V. E. Day, did you?"

"Guess not. God damn. I should have known better. Didn't know when I was well off."

"Where are you from?"

"Revere, Massachusetts. Near Boston."

"Why didn't you stay there?"

"Bat crap! Have you been to Boston since the war? Have you been anywhere in the States?"

"No, but I've been back to London. From what the correspondents tell me, it's the same except that we have more little Yank bastards. No offense to you, Yank."

"Yeah, I've heard some pretty tales about that."

"Yes, England is prosperous in the new era of peace. Splendidly so with U.R.R.A. practically shelved and the Marshall Plan and the Russians playing a political tug o' war."

"That's nothing," Roche said. "Good old United States. Supplies half the world in food and

munitions during the war and now a vet can't find an apartment for his wife and kid."

"Great. Great."

"Sure is."

There was silence for a moment.

"Say, Yank. I don't mean to be too personal, but are you Jewish?"

"Hell, no. I lived in a Jewish neighborhood in Revere and picked up the language as a kid. Comes back easy. You might say I'm Catholic."

"I see. Well, I'm Anglican, as far as that goes."

"Where did you learn Arabic?"

"Oh, some in the university. Then in North Africa. The rest of it here."

Roche looked at his watch. He got up and went to Yolich. "Maax should have been back at least ten minutes ago."

"Yes," Yolich agreed and his brow wrinkled as he nodded. "Yes. He should have returned."

"It will be dawn soon, God damn it," Roche said.

He came back to the prisoner and sat down against the wall. His eyes were on the silent, staring Arabs across from him. "These bastards'll drive me psycho yet," he said dryly. "Always God damned delays."

"You should have my uniformed mob to work with," the prisoner said. "You don't realize your good fortune."

"God damn," Roche said to nobody.

"Incidentally," the Englishman said, looking at the floor, "what became of my other men?"

"They're dead."

Roche got up and slung his Schmeizzer and ammunition pouch. He said to Yolich, "I am going to check the outpost." Adjusting his beret, he drew the blanket aside and went out.

Except for the occasional sputtering of the candle all was quiet in the room. When the candle sputtered, the flame danced on the wick and the shadows shimmered on the walls and the floor. The Englishman lighted a cigarette and inhaled deeply. Yolich was trimming his nails with his knife. The guard at the rear of the room had sat down. Now, he stood up and leaned in the corner, rifle in the crook of his arm. The guard by the door sat watching the prisoners, his eyelids drooping. When the Englishman leaned forward and crushed his butt in the dirt, the guard by the door shifted the rifle in his lap and, as the Englishman settled back against the wall, he stretched his short legs out before him.

There was a sound of boots on gravel from outside. The blanket swung aside and Roche came in. He frowned as he looked at the two guards. "Yolich," he said before the leader, "that new man, short fellow, the one who came without grenades. I do not want him on patrol any more."

Yolich set his dagger on the table. "Why?"

"Half asleep on his post. I was on him before he heard me. That does not go on any patrol I am on."

"Very well."

"Patrols are not picnics," Roche said. "I have no use for men like that."

Yolich nodded and went on trimming his nails.

Roche sat down cross-legged against the rear wall facing the door. He unslung his Schmeizzer and laid it across his lap. He lighted a cigarette and spat the dry bits of tobacco from his lips. "God damn!" His voice was very low. He looked at his watch.

"Any word from Maox?" he asked of Yolich.

"No," Yolich said.

"It will be daylight in an hour."

"Yes. What do you propose?"

"That we move out. If Maox is out there, we will meet him on the way."

"What about the prisoners?"

"We will take them along."

"Very well," Yolich said. "We will wait ten more minutes. I prefer moving when I know whether or not the way is clear."

Roche looked at his watch and settled back. "It does not make much difference when it is this close to daylight." He turned to the Englishman who still sat against the side wall. "I've got your word, John, but these boys don't go by words very much. When we start back, stay near me and watch your step."

"Right, Yank."

Roche puffed on his cigarette and his eyes went over the Arabs slowly. He drew his ammunition pouch forward so that it leaned against his thigh. Then he opened the flap and checked each magazine, depressing the first cartridge of each with his finger to feel the smoothness and resistance of the spring. He fastened the flap and returned the pouch to its place by his side.

"A neat job you fellows pulled, Yank," the Englishman said. "Did you say you had planned it?"

"Yeah, really not much to it."

"It worked," the prisoner said.

"Remember when my outfit got in that spot in Holland?" Roche said. "We had just relieved 'B' company. Before we had settled down and got used to the darkness and the silence, the Jerries infiltrated and flanked us at close range. Here we did about the

same thing. We waited till your boys had moved in and were just settling down. Then we caught you flat-footed. You see, we had spotted you on the way."

"I suppose my praise wouldn't mean much. The evidence of my being a prisoner speaks for itself."

"Well, we all make our mistake if we stay at it long enough," Roche said settling back again.

"C'est la guerre," the Englishman said.

"C'est la guerre, and all the dirt that goes with it."

"War is hell, as you Americans say."

"Yeah. But, at least, war doesn't profess to abide by high sounding rules and codes. Well, it has a few but we don't profess to go by the letter of them."

"Dog eat dog but in a dog's way."

"Yeah," Roche said.

He looked at Yolich. Yolich was watching the prisoners. The guard by the door was smoking a cigarette. The man in the corner slid down to a sitting position again and laid his rifle across his right thigh, pointing over the prisoners' heads. Roche blew smoke slowly out in front of him and watched the smoke climb lazily in the air.

Suddenly Roche dropped his cigarette and his hand moved to the grip of his Schmeizzer. He cocked his head like a dog and stared at the door. His eyes shifted quickly to both walls and back to the blanket over the door. The blanket jerked down and streaks of flame shot in from the dark as the room was filled with the crashing of a machine gun. The guard slumped in the corner. Roche snapped his Schmeizzer up and fired toward the door. Flame rapid bursts. The lines of flame

crossed. The Schmeizzer dropped flashed from its muzzle in sharp, in his lap. An Arab leaped through the door, submachine gun blasting into Yolich's face. The guard by the door was on his feet. A shot from outside caught him in the back and he jerked forward to the floor on his rifle. More Arabs rushed into the room. The Englishman lay close against the wall, his face in the dirt.

"Cease fire!" a voice commanded in Arabic.

The room was very still. From outside came the snapping of rifles. A grenade burst and the firing ceased. A prisoner moaned as he rolled on the floor. Another lay still in the dust.

The Englishman got to his feet spitting. "Good work, Rustum. But I wouldn't care for any more of it," he said.

The man with the Sten gun grinned.

The Englishman turned to Roche. Roche still sat cross-legged against the wall, hands on the Schmeizzer in his lap. His head leaned back against the wall, eyes straight ahead, and mouth slightly open. A trickle of blood detached itself from the small hole in his throat and ran under his shirt. A red stain seeped from inside the shirt and spread slowly.

The Englishman looked up at Rustum. "Ah — Rustum —," he stammered.

"Yes, Colonel."

"Uh—Do you have the radio nearby?"

"A messenger is on his way to the lorry now, sir."

"Good. Have your men get these bodies out of here," he said. "And, Rustum, you take care of this one. He's an American. Put his weapons and personal belongings on the table here."

"Yes, sir."

"Begging the colonel's pardon, sir, it was dangerous of the colonel to come to establish the advance command post with such a small force."

"It wouldn't have been dangerous if I'd had soldiers."

Rustum was silent.

"Sorry, Rustum. That couldn't possibly mean you."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now, let's get this command post organized. I wish they'd hurry with that radio."

"Will the attack go as planned, sir?"

"Rustum, if the attack is not on at 1030, it has not gone as planned. That's all I can predict."

Six Arabs came out of the command post. They looked at the sun rising over the summit of the hill. The rocky slope was covered with grey-brown brier.

"By Allah," one said in Arabic, "That sun will burn before we are done."

"Sometimes I have doubts about the commander's sanity," another said and he unstrapped mattocks and shovels from the side of the truck that was parked by the house.

"Well, well, my brave warriors," said a man who was placing twigs in a crude stone fireplace a few paces from the house, "is it oil you are going to dig for?"

"No. Rubies," a man with a shovel said.

"May Allah reward your efforts."

"The commander wants a grave dug for the American, Abi," the first one said.

"Naturally. He will smell like any other corpse when the sun cooks him."

"Yes, but the commander wants this grave two meters deep."

"A good grave," Ali said.

"Yes, a good grave. And it must be dug over yonder summit to please the colonel."

"Well, that is a fine assignment for ambitious young warriors. You may be promoted for your excellent work."

"Do not laugh so heartily, Ali. You might be promoting the

corpse of the pig to the summit," the man with the shovel said.

Ali laughed again. "Fortunate boys. Going to the summit to watch the sun rise over the Sea of Galilee."

"May you drown in it!"

Ali laughed. He struck a match and touched it to the kindling. He broke more twigs as the flames crackled and a thin wisp of smoke rose in the still air.

As I Remember

February 17, 1948

Lines to T. M.

By PHILIP MAGEE

He saw
That in you no terror sprang
From high-flung pride
Crushed by a fall of faith;
He heard
From you no doubting cries
That echo in a hollow heart
Where once love lived;
He knew
That on you pain's cord had little hold . . .
Though it twists a soul
Till the tortured, agonized, shrieks out in curse.

But this coarse cord
You calmly wove
Into the cloth of life.

You wore life well;
What he gave you
Was but a coat, while some have gowns,
But you wore it well . . .
Square to the shoulders
Firm at the back,
No sagging wrinkles, no loose edge.
You wore life well.

Now, quietly, He takes it from you.
It will not fit others;
It was your life, your cloth, your coat;
Nor worthy are others to wear it!

Outside in a Mental Hospital

By SHIRLEY HOILAND

AT A STATE institution which is maintained for those who are mentally incompetent, there is a gate. The outer grounds are otherwise accessible. Bill (bringing not even a name with him from the past) locks the gate in the evening and opens it in the morning. Bill has faithfully performed this futile service for a number of years, unknowing and uncaring that the world passes freely in and freely out on either side.

A long, gaunt figure weaves to and fro on an unseen pivot in an illusory wind.

A niagara of living death cascades over the canyon of the years. The psychiatrist, in a frail canoe of alien stuff, teeters as he tries to catch a bucketful of life. He is unutterably weary of the precarious sameness of hope; then treachery. He must think and feel to help; he must cease to think and feel to continue to help. His mission succeeds or fails—or succeeding, fails—or fails, succeeding. He is a man I do not know, for he must hold to faith he does not have in an onrushing torrent of failure. And there are always more and more and more catapulting toward, around and then beneath.

Are you crazy? What makes you think you are? or aren't? When did you come here? How long have you been here? Do you know where you are? What day

of the week is this? Who is the president of the United States? Who are you?

The headnurse is young; she comes and goes. She found, while here as a student, a bit of substance which had lived and might be made to live again. She wants to do something about it! Finish the job she left undone! The bit she hoped to rescue submerges and disappears. She, appalled at wasted time and energy, moves on to more responsive avenues of endeavor. I do not know her for she escapes from terror.

'Course I don't remember you. Never seen you before. Don't know you. Don't like you.

The student nurse is scared; sometimes a blackened eye or bruised shin bears blatant testimony that she has not yet learned the art of protection. She is bewildered; here, kindness is repayed with violence and sympathy with a vulgarity beyond the realm of former experience. At the end of three months she no longer is repulsed by physical illness and death, and insanity has become a fact of life. I do not know her for I am old enough to fear life and death and madness.

She's good today; she's bad today. He can be trusted to help with the babies. She's been quiet for several days now; better watch out!

The attendant drifts from hospital to hospital, from jutting chins and frantic eyes to frantic eyes and jutting chins. Sometimes he is a poet, or a humanitarian; usually he is uneducated, sadistic, or just calloused to all degrees of human suffering. He is of another race; another kind. I do not know him for he is scar tissue and I am an open, infected wound.

She put on a good show; it took six of us to get her inside again. Damn 'em all, I'd like to see 'em everyone dead if I didn't need the job.

There are others who live outside on the inside. There is a psychologist testing and testing and testing for intelligence, orientation and regression. There are therapists who work and work and work for responses to work, play, entertainment and body-stimulation. There are technicians who take X-rays; some who prepare prescriptions for physical disturbances. There are many lay-workers who are here for the sake of curiosity, convenience, necessity and sometimes happenstance. I do not know them for I am one of them.

Me? Oh, I work in a mental hospital. Never a dull moment. The other day a man rode up on a bicycle and turned himself in; he had escaped in '42.

But around and about them all, the chain gang of the spirit trudges, sometimes races, interimbounds. Tendrils of consciousness reach out to everyone in the place of his awareness.

A hoarse cry—what is it? Help? Sixty seconds pass—again a cry—yes, it is. It's HELP! Again—again—again. Hoarse and fainter—faint and farther. Help an echo? a shadow?

The schizophrenic is not with us; his senses have escaped. He

sees things we cannot see; he hears sounds we cannot hear; his other world compels absorption; he is beyond the need for love, for food for rest.

It's time to eat, John. You must go to sleep now, John. We like you John. We are trying to help you John.

The manic-depressive is here again—gone again. Sometimes she's up; sometimes she's down. She is drunken with excitement, she is stupored in sadness. And she knows. She knows.

Send us more restraints; she's chewed through six of them this morning. She hasn't eaten or spoken for three days; shall we tube-feed her?

The paranoid has no friend; all men are imposters. He has no family; only those who pose as such to gain his confidence. His food is poisoned by ten thousand antagonists. The news commentator tortures him by proclaiming his guilty deeds to all the world. He carries a heavy burden for he controls all destiny and its manifold hands are determined to destroy him.

Please eat, John; here, I'll take a bite; see, it isn't poisoned. Sure, I'll turn off the radio.

The drug addict and the alcoholic are misfits, even in a dilemma. They have insight into all but their own causes. They find strength in a stronger weakness. They are greatly sane in a greater insanity.

Of course you can help it. Here, have a chocolate and face yourself, Mary.

The neurosyphilitic has been betrayed by his body. It has driven him via passion and cruelty to a mellowed half-forgetfulness. He is tender and confused.

No, you can't go home yet, John. Yes, I know you love your family; you wouldn't hurt them.

The mental deficient is a haunt. Whether by inheritance or accident she appears, she is the distorted reflection of our would-be perfect selves. She is the butt of stupid laughter; she is hurt and does not understand. She is hunted and never captured. She is trained and never tamed.

Feed her. Bathe her. Clothe her. Put her to bed.

There are all of these and there are others who are outside on the inside. There is an enchanting psychopath, a confused senile, a groaning neurotic, and a perspiring encephalitic. They have a common cry: "Save us! Monster vehicles have carried us beyond your schemes, your dastard earthiness, your silly mores! Save us! These giants of our fantasies have

turned upon us! Save us! We are no longer with ourselves!" I do not know them; they are the median line between life and death I do not comprehend.

Treat the symptoms; we do not understand the causes. Reassure them. Be patient. Never lose your self-control.

Bill is locking his gate. I step five feet to the left to go around. He looks at and through me. Suddenly the knowledge of these smoldering, sooted effigies of a bewitched and bewitching society begins to churn within me. It wells up, curdles, and expends itself with aching dryness. Instinctively embarrassed, I glance at Bill; he's looking at and through me. I smile at him; I know him; we are akin. I, too, merely lock a gate—I cannot stem a tide.

Poems

By MARY B. CLAP

Winter Fog

Ghosts of old rains
Come back to brood
In once bright field
And frosted wood,

And our real world
Becomes a strange
Transigent
In double change,

Rifled and bared
By wind and frost
But in soft mist
All wanting lost.

Slow Turning

Seeing how earth, like me, too far away
Withdrawn from Light, is paralyzed and numb,
Watching her slow return, I try to say,
"Back to the Light I left I too shall come."

With hers, my torpor melting into tears
Relaxes, and with hers my hope aspires;
And Light for us both memorial banners stirs,
Of long-relinquished, beautiful desires.

The rose and pearl, the green and jonquil gold
Return as tenuously as shifting dreams
Whose sequences escape the fragile hold
Of sense on what is true or only seems.

Oh, earthy life, co-active with the sun,
Move my furled banners, set my courage free;
Renew your blossoming so oft begun,
And from what was, unfold what still may be—

That memories revived may still bring bloom
And presience of fragrance lift the heart,
And sunnier days incredibly assume
A lost spring's rainbow-colored counter-part.

Conversation at Bennie's

By CARROLL O'CONNOR

EXCUSE me for butting in, but I just heard you mention George Apostopoulis and it happens I knew the guy—knew him well. Fact is, he and I sailed together years ago on the old *Antigua*, which you might have heard of but I doubt it. We was messmen on her when she was running bananas from Nevitas up to New York. That was on the Cuban run back in the Twenties.

Just a minute. That music is pure murder. Say, do you guys mind choking that box down a bit over there? I'm trying to say something here. Thanks.

Not that I want to push in on his conversation because I don't mean no means, but when I heard you mention George Apostopoulis I figured maybe I could straighten you out on a few things, like what became of George and such as that. I'd like to tell you first of all that you could run over there to the Dog House and go from one floor to another and room to room, and you wouldn't find nobody who knows more about George than I do. That's the truth, believe me. The pair of us was close for a long time. We was drunk together, raised hell together and worked together.

And we made money together too, plenty of it, more than we knew what to do with. And let me

ashore and forgot about him, figuring I'd never run across him again.

But I did. It wasn't till about nine years later, but I seen him again, and when I tell you how it happened you'll look surprised.

I don't know if you two would remember it or not, but anyway (I think it was the winter of '36) beer and good booze was back and a guy couldn't make a dime no more on Cuban rum. Everybody was drinking Manhattans and Side Cars and what not, and if you showed them a bottle of good San Juan Methusalem they'd hit you in the eye with it. Things was just plain slack unless you was a undertaker or kept a saloon. I'd lay ashore for a month or so and then maybe make a short trip, but nothing you'd call steady. That went on until the big strike put us all ashore, and that's when I met George Apostopoulis again.

It was around December, maybe a little before or a little after, I'm not sure. It was around that time anyway. I was in Port Arthur, Texas, when the strike was called, and I got out on the picket line with the rest of the fellas. You couldn't make five cents in them days unless you knew angles, and George and me knew angles. Between the señoritas and the booze we'd have a grand old

time down south and wouldn't spend nothing for it. We'd come back to the States with enough rum to make us at least a hundred under the table, and that was every trip. Good money for that time, take my word for it. Them days a guy could get himself a good suit of clothes for fifteen bucks, and a fin's worth of groceries ashore would last a fair-sized family a month. Tell you what. Just for fun some day, ask Bennie, behind the bar, if what I'm telling you ain't level.

That don't have nothing to do with the story. I just put it in to give you a rough idea of how things was in them days, and what was what between me and George. We was both real buddies, and where you'd see one of us you'd see the other too, and likewise vice-versa. In fact the gang (I mean the Old Gang) down here on South Street used to ask if we wasn't sweethearts or something. Just kidding us, you know, and all in fun, which was the way things was long ago. Believe me it ain't the same around here no more and never will be. When I think of the fun. Fun all the time. Some of it hard maybe, but you always like to think of the good ahead of the bad. That's getting away from the story again, but what I mean is George and me was close. Real close.

Wait. Let's have a fast one to oil up the pipes.

We rode the *Antigua* for about two years, George and me. When we got off of her, we got off together. After that I guess we stayed on the beach for a while before we caught another job out. Banana boat. Can't think of the name of her right off, but she was the same type as the *Antigua* anyway. Belfast-built, carried around

four thousand ton of bananas and maybe a few school teachers in the summer time. We stayed with her about eighteen months, lousy grub and all. And boys, let me tell you the meals on that tub was mar-killing. I wish I could think of the name of her because you might just know her. Still running and crummy as ever. Saw her in Charleston last winter. Anyway we stayed with her that year and a half and got our belly full of maggots and anything else that could jump or fly in the stew. Then one day I packed my gear and scrambled. We was in New Orleans and I remember trying to talk George into paying off with me, but it was no dice. He wouldn't leave. Said he wanted to make a couple more trips. So much as I hated to break up the friendship, there it was. I couldn't see staying on that floating fleabag another five minutes and he couldn't see getting off. I don't know why he wanted to stay, but that's how we split up.

Well, I missed George for a while. You can't just break up a thing like that and not feel it at all unless you ain't got a heart in you. I even dropped him a line once to the company office for old time's sake, but he never answered me. You know this business. You got a pal today, and tomorrow you're on your way to Rio and he's off for China and that's how it goes. So I filed George away with the dead and the married-boys in front of the Standard Oil locks there. And was it cold? It was the coldest place you ever been in. Listen, they'll tell about that sunny southland, but don't believe it. They got a special kind of cold down in that place that'd freeze hot fuel oil. And me out carrying a sign around

with nothing on me but a shirt and a pair of pants.

That was what you call a strike, let me tell you. The Pinkertons broke some of the boys' skulls in that one, and all so you guys could have it soft today.

So there I was in Port Arthur, hugging that sign around in the cold and wishing to hell I had a drink, when up comes a big car with a motorcycle cop leading the way, and it stops over to the side of the pier entrance. Naturally we all quit parading up and down to see who's going to get out of that car. Me, I figured it must be some company leather-ass come down to look over the layout with a guard for himself so he wouldn't accidentally get worked on with the boys with the signs. You know most of us got feeling very mean walking around in the cold, waiting for a break from the stiff in the office and I, for one, would have gladly belted a company stiff with my particular little sign. But who do you suppose steps out of that big car. Well, boys, it was nobody but our old friend, George.

That's the truth. It was George. Let's order us up another round here and I'll go on with this.

Well, I could hardly believe it, but there was Apostopoulis, dressed up like the governor of Texas with a new hat, overcoat and shoes, his big belly wrapped up in a pin stripe suit and a diamond stick-pin in his tie. He got out of the car like a woman that's afraid she's going to get dirty from something, and there was two other gumshoes with him besides the one on the bike. Also, he's got a husky little runt with him who looks like a Filipino, with long arms down to his knees and a face like a chimp. I don't know if George seen me then, and

I never found out later. But he got out of that car, looked at us as if we was something that just crawled out from under the dock, and walked straight into the shed with the cops and the little freak around him for protection. Ten minutes later, somebody came down from the union hall and told us the company just put a steward on the tanker inside the shed. He said the steward was a Greek by the name of Apostopoulis. So, if I didn't believe it when I seen him first, I knew for sure it was George when I heard that. He got the job through the company port steward, I was told, because of the cute way they felt about each other. That may be just talk, though, and I don't like to say nothing about George now that he's gone. In the end, he got his anyway.

Which brings me to the main thing I wanted to tell you. It so happens I was up in Portland, Maine, six years or so after that Port Arthur thing, just payed off a Liberty Ship up there and on a hell of a drunk. This was in October of '42, maybe a little before or a little after. I'm no good at dates so I can't be sure exactly it was around that time anyway, and that's close enough. I was staying in some dump up there, sleeping off my little bun when Joe Rogers of the War Shipping Administration comes busting into my room telling me he's got a swell berth for me. Well, Rogers wasn't fooling this kiddo one damn bit. Them gazabos never came after you to your hotel room with nice jobs for you. I sat myself up in the bed and began to look wise. He tells me it's a Hog Island freighter called the *Niagara City*, says she's short a cook and won't I do him a favor and take her out. I says, hell no I

wouldn't take her out. The tub was built during the Old War back in '17 and I personally wouldn't ride one of that type from the Battery to Staten Island. But he keeps after me and after me to sign on her, telling me what a great skipper she has and what a swell steward. I keep telling him they must be Limies or Swedes because nobody but a Limey would sail one of them crates, and nobody but a Swede could sail one. And so we argue.

Well, this Rogers is a great little talker, you know, and I'm gassed anyway. I think he must've fed me the rest of my bottle plus some of his own he brought on the hip because somehow I got signed on that lousy wagon as crew cook. When I come to, and got my senses back, I was in a bunk and the bunk was rolling and an open port was staring me in the face. So I was on a ship I'd never saw before, not knowing where the hell I was going or how long I'd been gone. But I decided to make the best of it. After all, there I was out there, and no chance of going nowhere but where the ship was going, so I washed up and started for the steward's room to report I was ready to turn to. From the dirty look of the alleyways I figured the steward must be a Limey after all, so I don't have to tell you how surprised I was when I went up to his quarters, opened the door, and found George Apostopoulis sitting there, who is not a Limey but a Greek, as you already know.

You could have bowled me over with a feather. There he was, sitting on the edge of his bunk, and the Filipino freak, still with him, sitting on a chair in the corner of the stateroom. At first I figured the booze might be working on me

yet, but George looks up at me, grinning, and says, "How are you, Kid?" in his smooth sort of female voice, and I know it's him, no mistake.

"I took a look in at you before," he goes on, "but you was still cold. Must have been pretty strong stuff, huh?"

"Yeah," says I, "pretty strong. Seeing you makes me wish I'd saved some." He laughed and handed me a bottle. He looked the same as ever except maybe a little heavier. He had the best ship's quarters I ever seen. They was just like a hotel room, honest-to-Jesus, with the bulkheads painted baby blue and ports on two sides. Over in the corner where the freak was sitting there was a little glass closet full of booze, and in the middle of the room there was a desk with a glass top on it. And it was the biggest damn room I ever seen. They must have broke into the next room to make it. I took a pull of the bottle and looked around the place.

I says, "What the hell are you on here, captain or what?" The freak in the corner gave out a laugh and George turned on him with a growl like a dog.

"Pay no attention to him, Kid," he says to me. "He'd a poor nut I take 'round with me. Say, how come you on board here, Kid?"

"Doing a favor for a friend," I says. He laughed, and so I laughed too and we had a drink. Then we chinned for a while. Not about much, you know. Just about the ship, the galley, the crew, where we was going and so on. Just everyday stuff with no mention of years ago and what happened then. I found out we was heading for Iceland, port of Reykjavik, and we'd probably jump off for Russia from there. I asked about getting some clothes and he said

he'd fix me up right away. We had another quick one together and I got up to go. In fact, I was half out of the room, about to close the door when he calls me back.

"Wait a minute," he says. "I want to talk with you, Kid." I came back in the room and sat down. And that was when I noticed the diamonds. He had four of them, set in rings, two on each hand, and so damn big I wondered why I hadn't spotted them a few minutes ago. I don't know much about stones, but them four was good ones, real good ones. You can always tell. These was the McCoy. When he seen me looking at them he shoved his hands into his coat pockets, giving the freak a dirty look and then me a dirtier one.

"I want tell you, Kid," he says. "On here I'm boss. Remember what I tell you. Don't look for anything, see? When I want you I call you. You get it, Kid?"

I said, "Sure, I get it, George," and I walked out. From that time on I left him strictly alone. I did my work and that was all. I never wanted to have nothing to do with him anyway because I knew what a rat he was in his heart. After Port Arthur when he scabbed on the rest of us, I guess nobody'd have anything to do with him anyway unless they was made to or, unless like you guys, they didn't know nothing about that business.

But two things bothered me, or maybe I should say five things: the freak, and them four diamonds. I remembered the big, flashy stick-pin he had on the last time I seen him. That was about the time that he picked up with this here freak, and because he never had such fancy stuff before, I figured maybe there might be a

tie-up between the freak and the diamonds. I made up my mind I was going to talk to the freak first chance I got. He was signed on as salon messman which kept him mostly busy topside. And I never seen him much in his off hours so I knew he was most of his time with Apostopoulis. I asked around in the crew for the word on him, but nobody could tell me a thing. Besides, the boys didn't like him no more than they liked George.

Finally I got my chance, though. We was off the Grand Banks a few days out. I'd come on deck for some air about an hour before the noon meal, and I was sitting on number four hatch having myself a smoke when I seen the freak moving around the deck cargo in the stern. I tossed away the butt and started back there. What I didn't see was good old George looking down on me from the boat deck about twenty feet above. I seen the freak go behind a great big crate so I followed him back, crawled up on the crate and peeked over the edge. Sure enough there he was, sitting on the other side with a big diamond in his fist, drooling over it like a baby with a piece of candy. I never seen anything like it. The poor bastard was off his nut for sure, making all sorts of noises, and rolling the big stone around in his hand and against his face and sticking it in his pocket and pulling it out again.

I watched him for a minute or two and then, all of a sudden, I jumped down beside him and grabbed him by the neck. I thought he was going to pass out. "You stole it from George," I said, holding him by the collar.

"No," he yells. "No, no! He steal from me. He steal everything from me. He no steal this."

And just like that, the slippery little guy was gone up forward before I could lay a hand on him again. I'd never saw no one so scared before.

And then, I heard George's voice behind me. "You frighten my little fren', huh Kid?" He must've started back there right after me, and to tell the honest truth, I was a little scared myself, he was such an oily, sneaky-looking rat.

I says to him, "Well, where'd you pop out of?"

He says, "Can't you stay where you belong, Kid?"

"Well," I says, "I thought I was doing you a favor, I thought I'd caught the little guy running off with one of your rocks."

He looked at me very hard.

"But," I says, "I find that he was just trying to hide his own stuff from you, as you seem to have most of it already."

Well, boys, if he'd had a gun on him right then, he'd of killed me. I never hope to see a face like the one he made. It was terrible. And that's all he did. Made that face and walked off. And that was the last I seen of him alive.

You probably know from the papers pretty much what happened that night, how we rammed the tanker in the fog, and sunk her and sunk ourselves too. It happened about four in the morning and caught most of us in our bunks. All I remember is running out on deck like a chased burglar and going over the side with the chief engineer right after me. Him and me and the eight saved off the tanker was the only ones supposed to have come through. But there was another pair picked up too because they took me to the British Patrol station at St. John's to identify them as soon

as the Lime-juicers brought us in. And you didn't read about this in the papers.

The dead one was George Apostopoulis, and an awful looking corpse he made lying on that table up there without a stitch on him, frozen purple and swollen like a jellyfish. And the most awful thing was . . . he had no hands! No hands at all! And nobody there'd been able to figure out what happened to them.

The live survivor, or at least the one who was still breathing, was the little freak. George and him'd been picked up by a fishing boat a little while after the *Niagara City* went down. The Scotchman who ran the boat said he'd found them on top of a life-raft. He said the freak was still conscious, but couldn't talk from being froze and that the fat one's hooks was already off. I didn't say nothing to no one, but I was thinking fast.

Then they took me in to look at the freak. One of the croakers went over to the table where he was lying and felt his pulse. Then he opened the little guy's shirt and gave a jump back about three feet. The other doc there went over, then we all went over to look, the Limey Navy guys, me and the chief from our tub. And, what do you think was there? The two hands of George Apostopoulis, with the rings still on the fingers, inside the freak's shirt, blood running off them and everything. The only way I could figure was that the freak couldn't get the rings off George's fat fingers, so he took the hatchet on the raft and did the next best thing. I guess if he'd of thought to dump old George off the raft and then was able to stay conscious, he might of got away with it. I really felt sorry for the poor little guy. You can't hate a dumb ani-

nal for what he does and, knowing George, who's to say he did the wrong thing anyhow? And I'll swear that freak was more animal than human being, so help me.

What happened to the freak? Boys, I don't know. What happened to those rocks and where'd they come from in the first place? Ask the Limies in St. John's. Maybe they know.

Anyway, that's what become of George Apostopoulis, which is what I started out to tell you. I could of quit where the tub went down and not leave you to guess as I figure you're guessing-now. But drink up and the next's on me. And you can tell those guys to go ahead and prime that music box if they want. We're done talking over here.

One Day

By DONNA COSTER

One day,
The wind blew
And puffed his cheeks
At clothes
Hanging on the line.
Fretfully he moved them
Till they seemed to be
Startled gulls
Impatient to be off.

Then a woman came, hurrying.
"I wonder if they're dry," she said.
And the magic vanished.

Morituri Te Salutamus

"... Christ himselfe came to a *Si Possible*,
If it be possible, let this Cup passe"

—Donne, Sermon LXVIII

By DAVID PERKINS

With careful steps, the dilettante picks his way
Along the intellectual boneyard of his day.
Smiling, he murmurs exquisite regrets,
And Ilse, from an ersatz lover, gets
"*Ein kleines Weihnachtsgeschenk.*" Will it be Christ
Come out of the womb again? Will it be Christ,
Roaring for order, with his gavel raised
Over our banquet table? See, the dazed
Masses swarm before the factory gates,
Lifting their placards, and the owner waits
The sound of sirens howling Violence.
The tills ring up our lives; dollars and cents
Toll with a different sound, but equally mean
What bells meant once to St. Paul's ailing dean.
Our morning mail brings in a new resource:
Be mystic; learn by correspondence course.
The panaceas contend to dig our graves.

John, we are separate, islands, and the waves
Engulf us singly, pauper and capitalist;
Few are remembered, precious fewer missed.
But things go on: in rather long sojourn,
Demanding exit, that he may return,
The prisoner of heaven rattles the bars
Of his celestial cell, and the cold stars
Print their eternal patterns on the night.
Look down, John, from your dizzy height,
And pause a moment, bundled in your shroud,
Rolling your sonorous syllables from a cloud
Over a congregation of dead kings,
To hear the fugue our motley chorus sings.
Listen, the praying individual heart:
"Make me a part; let me not be apart."
Listen, the ghost upon the middle tree:
"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Beast in a Cage

By JACK DIXON

IT BEGAN in the sadness of coming home. Spring was long that year, and cold, with a bitter edge to the wind, racing along under a hard bright blue sky. It whistled down the steep streets, down the hillsides, tumbling weeds and newspapers along the sidewalks, and setting last year's dead leaves rustling in the concrete gutters. It poured through the channels formed by the buildings like a strong current of icy water. At night it pounded against the windows and moaned in the barren branches of the trees, carrying sounds far and unmistakable from the mines across the hills; rattling wheels, humming cables, and an occasional voice, sharp and surprisingly clear. Raw and freezing, it blew through the steam and noise of the railroad station to welcome us home.

One by one we came back, expecting nothing and yet expecting something, moving uncertainly in a place at once familiar and strange. Everything was the same—everything except the small and insignificant facts that arise perpetually to remind you that change goes with the years: a vacant lot where a remembered building stood, a face grown tired and old, a lowered voice telling of death. The long waiting and the anticipation had deluded us.

The dream of joy and triumph was gone.

Even when we were alone among ourselves, released from the nervously quiet scrutiny of our families, we found little contentment. Our thoughts, our memories, were too far apart, tiny scatterings caught from the immensity of a war encompassing the earth. After the first reunions, and the telling of the interesting and laughable incidents, there was nothing more to say or do. It became a long succession of evenings in some bar, drinking quietly or noisily, or long solitary walks in the darkness. Gradually, and with a growing sense of futility, we watched the first excitement and sense of relief diminish and die. The war—the great adventure—was ended; it had trailed off into the nothingness of a long and tiresome journey back into the commonplace, and the surrender of all the hopes and illusions it had raised in our minds was inevitable and complete.

For Bob, and for me, that spring was something more, a reminder of the last time we'd seen each other, three years before. It had been October then, an October clear and cold, with a sky of the same hard blue, and a chill in the air that filmed all the roadside pools with ice, long before sunset.

We were on furlough, our last furlough before going overseas. Everything had been suffused with a penetrating immediacy then, and the future was crowded with the excitement of anticipation.

I remember that furlough very clearly. Like all those happenings which have little or no connection with what goes before or follows them, it has the clarity of a specimen fixed in amber, an indivisible moment caught whole out of space and time and held, bright and untarnishable, in the memory. On our last day we went rabbit-hunting; not because we wanted to hunt, very much, nor because we cared very much for shooting, but because the streets were already a little unfamiliar, and the curious deference of passers-by toward the returned soldier made us feel uneasy and a little unworthy. We were then, as we were to be later, a group a little apart, not quite understanding, not quite understood. It was easier to go somewhere together to think and talk quietly of those things we knew well.

We drove a long way that day, far beyond the sight or sound of the pounding hoist engines of the mines, of the smoke and smell of the city, and the traffic noises of its streets, to a high level valley, where the road was only a narrow ribbon of asphalt, wandering through a wide and lonely immensity of sagebrush. On either side loomed the mountains, blue and huge and impossibly far away. The silence was so complete that sounds trailed off into it and disappeared, swallowed up by the emptiness. We walked for hours in the clear October air, softly crushing the frost underfoot in the shaded places, watching the

sun climb in the blue sky and gradually dry the earth. Toward noon we stopped and lay for long time in the withered grass idly watching the sky, until I suggested, at last, that we hunt some more.

"We got nothin' against them rabbits," Bob said. "Let 'em stay where they're at. If you wanna shoot 'em, we will, but, hell, I like them rabbits. D'you wanna shoot some?"

I said I guessed I didn't, and we stayed there all afternoon quietly counting away the minutes until we had to separate again and leave the high and lonely valley for the confusion and urgency of an army at war.

We didn't meet again until it was over and we came back to take long walks together through the night, over the cold city pavements, waiting for the monotony to enmesh us completely and send us back to our jobs and the old daily rounds. Everyone was drifting back, slipping reluctantly into the old routine, and trying to pick up what they had left. The change was easiest for those who had something to go back to, but for those who had nothing, and those to whom the years of absence had brought hopes of something better, the slow-passing days that brought nothing new had a creeping damnation in them. For Bob there was nothing to return to but the hot, wet, pitchblack tunnels of the mines. At last, when his money was gone, he did go back, down the same shaft where he'd worked ever since he was sixteen.

After that I didn't see him for a while, but I heard scraps of news about him occasionally that sounded wrong and threatening. He quit his job twice in the first

three months, but always went back. He fought with his step-father the last time he quit and took a room in town for a while, but went back home after he hired out again. His friends said he got drunk intermittently and missed work. A few times I went to see him, but he was never home. His mother and step-father, old country people who spoke only broken English were surly and mistrustful, and their littered house was too depressing for me to wait here for Bob. I found him at last, one night, sitting in a saloon about suppertime, idly spinning a glass on the bar in front of him. We sat at the bar for a while and finally walked out onto the sidewalk in the cool air of evening.

It was summer then. The evenings were warm and the twilights long. The air held a lingering softness, an aftermath of the hot day. We stood and watched the sun go down behind the mountains, throwing the high dark shapes of buildings sharp against the golden sun-hazed distances. Far below, to the south, the shadows were already beginning to spread across the floor of the valley and sweep up the hillsides like a dark tide. In the deepest parts of the valley a few lights were shining, small constant sparks in the darkness.

The afternoon crowds were gone, and the traffic of evening hadn't started, so only an occasional automobile disturbed the quiet of the street.

"This is how it should be," Bob said, "You gotta have quiet and a little air. I just wanna stand here and take it easy for a while. I'm supposed to work night shift tonight but I'm not gonna go. How can you go down that mine when it's like this? It's so damn

dark and hot down there and you can't breathe. You oughta see that place we're workin' in. Its an old place where they mined once before and filled with waste when they were finished. Now we're goin' through it again and everything is loose and shaky and rocks fallin' all the time. Whenever you're in there you can hear the ground workin' around up above. When you got the drill goin' you can't hear it and you wish you could because then you'd know if it was ready to fall on you; and then when the drill's off you listen and wish you couldn't hear it because it's crackin' and rattlin' till you think you'll go crazy. The other night I was drillin' and I hit an old post that was buried. I thought the whole thing was cavin' in. You could hear it rumble for two hundred feet up above. All the timber was creakin' and movin' and the whole place got full of dust. Everything in there was movin' around like it was alive. My partner and I got out, but we could hear it behind us all the way out to the shaft like it was an earthquake."

"Why don't you lay off for a while and look around for another kind of a job?" I said.

He shrugged. "There's nothin' else I know how to do. Except for the time I was in the army, I never worked any other place. I looked for other jobs when I first got back. I used to go out every day and try to get a job as a truck driver, or in a warehouse, or anything like that, but almost all of those places they had somebody comin' back from the army to take any jobs they had open.

"Then the old lady and the old man are after me all the time. 'Go to work, go to work, you haven't done a thing but lay around

since you got of the army.' So I go back to the mine and work for a while, and I get tired and fed up and scared of gettin' killed or a leg cut off, and I go out and get drunk. Then the old lady throws me out and I get ashamed because she and the old man raised me when times were pretty tough, and they did the best for me they knew how, so I go back to work and move home again, and things are all right for a while.

"But I have to get out of the mines. If I don't I'll be like the old man when I'm fifty, broken down and coughin' and just waitin' around till it's time to die. If a big slab of rock don't fall on you, the dust and bad air'll rot out your lungs."

It had gotten dark. The sky was still bright, but the shadows rushing up from the earth were beginning to climb toward the zenith and a few pale stars glowed just above the tops of the mountains. The street lamps made pools of light at intervals along the gray concrete sidewalk. Bob's face was beginning to grow indistinct in the twilight.

"I wish I could do something else. I wish I'd finished high school; maybe I could go to college or something. All the time when I was in the army I figured on coming home and getting a start in some other kind of job. Get a new house for the old man and the old lady after a while; things like that. But there was nothing to start in at. Lots of jobs in the mines, but nothing any place else. If there was another job, nobody wants a guy who never finished his sophomore year in high school."

He turned abruptly and tossed back a good-bye as he strode

away. He was tall and his shoulders looked very broad moving through the gathering darkness. It was hard to keep remembering that he was just twenty-three the summer.

After that it was trouble again for Bob. There was a succession of lost jobs, of longer and longer periods of inactivity, of bitter bouts of drunkenness, of fight and nights spent in the city jail. Places where he had always been welcome began to close their doors to him. He saw his friends less and less.

"Stay away from me when I'm drinking," he told me. "I go crazy when I drink. I get sore at my friends, I get thrown out of places and they tell me not to come back, I fight with the cops and get thrown in jail."

"Don't ever get put in that city jail. It's the filthiest hole I ever saw. It's crawling. You wouldn't dare lie on the bunks and the cockroaches get you if you lie on the floor. I got nightsticked a few before they locked me up because I took a swing at a cop. They closed both my eyes and told me when they let me out to remember that I fell down the stairs. I had twenty bucks when I went in there and nothing when I came out. I grabbed the assistant chief—his name's Maloney—and asked him for my twenty. He told me I was lucky to get out at all and I guess I was. They don't like cop-fighters in this town."

After that, Bob worked again for a while. We took long walks at night again. He wasn't content. We paced for hours, up the steep streets toward the mines, or down the dusty roads that crossed the valley to the south. We wandered in and out of the big miners' saloons where the constant

blare of music was all but drowned out by the clink of glassware at the bar, the rattle of dice and shouts of the crap-shooters, and the hum of conversation at the tables where the light flooded down on the green cloth and the stolid gamblers toyed with their cards. Near the door always were blue-uniformed policemen, quietly oblivious to the games. They watched Bob coldly and carefully as he went in and out, but he took no notice of it.

We walked, and he tried vainly to find the place where his life had twisted out of his grasp.

Then, as it had before, it began again. Drunk again, fights again, jail again. More doors closed against him. He was harder and harder to find or talk to. I located him at last one night, sitting at a bar in a dim saloon upstairs over a cheap restaurant and a pawnshop. There was some sort of dance floor, mostly in darkness, and a band playing somewhere in back. Bob sat on a stool midway along the bar in his shirtsleeves. His eyes were veiled and dull in the mirror, and he looked at me for a while before recognition came.

"Have a drink," he said, and grinned stupidly. "I'm drunk."

"Let me take you home, Bob," I said.

He shook his head. "Can't go home. Home's where they raise hell when you don't go to work. Home's where they throw you out when you get drunk."

"I'll get you a room, Bob. Come on."

"No, no," he pulled his arm away. "I'm gonna get drunk. I'm gonna get drunker'n I am."

He lowered his head on the bar for a moment, then straightened up and threw down a ten-dollar bill.

"Give us a couple of shots," he said to the bartender. "Have one yourself, too."

The bartender put down two drinks and a pile of change.

Bob stared at the change.

"Lotsa money," he said. "All kinds of money. Worked six shifts this week. Just got paid. I can eat and sleep and get drunk and if I still have a job next week I'll make enough to eat and sleep and get drunk next payday."

He tossed down his drink and looked for a minute at the shadowy forms of dancers in the mirror. His grin was gone.

"There oughta be somethin' else than this," he said. "Work all week in a dirty hole in the ground and then get drunk and spend all your money, get in fights, wake up in jail sick, with a busted eye and crawlin' with lice. Why does a guy do it? What good's that money if you hafta sweat and break your back for it and then toss it away on booze so you can feel good for ten minutes?"

He paused.

"Where did I go wrong, kid? You and me, we grew up together. Why are you a good guy and I'm a drunken bum? We used to go out hunting rabbits together, remember? We were gonna come back from the army and knock 'em all over. What happened to me? Why didn't I come back and go to work, and be like everybody else? Listen, remember how we all used to go out together when we were kids? I had a lotta friends then. Why didn't I turn out like some of those guys?"

"There's nothing wrong with you, Bob," I said. "You're having a tough time. You'll be all right. Let's go now."

"No, no," he said. "Wait, I wanna know."

His voice was rising. The bartender eyed him with hostility. He waved his arms and bumped the man on the other side of him, a swarthy sport with a thin moustache and white shoes who had just come in. The man smiled and shrugged.

"I'm drunk, now, but tell me when I'm sober," Bob said. "Tell me what's been the matter with me since I came home."

I saw the sport, just then, sliding his hand across the bar to take the pile of change that Bob had left there. I caught his wrist.

"That's my friend's change."

He smiled politely. "No, it's mine. I put down a ten."

"You didn't put down that ten, my friend," I said.

"I'll ask the bartender," he said. "Isn't this my change?"

"I don't know," the bartender said. "I put out a lot of change."

"You haven't had a drink since you came in," I said. "Let that change alone."

"Never mind," Bob said. He turned to the man.

"If that's your change, pick it up."

Just as he reached for it, Bob hit him with his open hand. The man's head twisted and his body crashed against the bar. The bartender and two other men ran around the end of the bar and pinned Bob against it. My arms were grasped from behind. The bartender looked at the man Bob had hit. He jerked his head sharply toward the door. The man scooped up the change and ran. After a minute or so the bartender and his friends pushed us out the door.

Outside on the sidewalk there was no one.

"Come on," Bob said, "They probably called the cops."

We stopped farther up the

street, in front of a blazing neon sign.

"Let's get you something to eat," I said.

"You'll have to pay for it," Bob said. "That was my last ten bucks."

We went inside, into the noise and clatter of a big saloon. We walked back, past the clash of glass and murmur of conversation at the bar, past rows of slot machines and poker tables to the curved lunch counter beside the steaming coffee urn. The waiter mopped the counter with a rag and set up two glasses of water.

"Whud'll ya have?"

"Couple of steaks."

He shouted the order back to the kitchen and reached into the silverware drawer. His eyes roamed vacantly around the place as he bent over, then focused suddenly and sharply on the door. I turned and looked. Maloney, the assistant police chief, was coming in. He wore plain clothes, with a dark topecoat and hat. For a few minutes he stood in the doorway letting his eyes roam over the place, sweeping in everything in a few glances. Then he began to walk, quietly, slowly, down the bar, past the rows of slot machines, past the poker tables where the players stopped the games and turned to watch, down the length of the room to the lunch counter. The clatter at the bar diminished into nothingness. He laid his hand on Bob's shoulder.

"Can't stay out of trouble, can you? Come on with me, booze fighter."

Bob spoke slowly, without raising his head.

"Let me alone, Maloney, I'm not going."

"You can come, or you can be dragged. Take your choice." Ma-

Maloney's red, meaty face bent closer to Bob's neck. His hand gripped tighter.

Bob's voice was low, a whisper of finality and regret.

"Not this time, Maloney. This time I'm not going."

Maloney spun him around on the stool.

"I won't tell you again." His hand caught the front of Bob's shirt and half-lifted him to his feet. His other hand swept back the skirt of his coat and reached for his back pocket.

Bob lunged from the stool. With one hand he drove Maloney's head against the wall, and with the other he gripped the wrist that struggled toward the pocket. The crash of the two bodies against the wall was thunderous in the complete silence of the room. The crowd froze into a grotesque frightened rigidity. No one moved or made a sound except Bob and Maloney, two locked bodies struggling in a vacuum where even time seemed to be stopped. Maloney jerked in a frenzy at Bob's fingers, which were driven like metal hooks into his throat. His right hand clawed at his coat, tearing furrows in the cloth with his fingernails. They tumbled to the floor, twisting, driven by fear, trying to escape. Maloney was a big man, and strong, but he couldn't dislodge Bob's hand, twisted deep in his flesh. He tore at Bob's hair, ripped with hooked fingers at his eyes, but couldn't escape.

Horror flowed into the still faces of the crowd. Maloney began to make terrible choking sounds. His right hand clenched, then relaxed, and his eyes twisted as though the eyeballs had torn loose in his head. Heavily his other hand fell to the floor, and his body went limp.

Bob rose to his knees. Nothing, not a person in the room moved. The entire scene hung suspended, without sound or movement or time. Then Bob began to run. He ran crouched over like an animal, bursting through the ring of people and out the door. I twisted clear of the mass and followed. The vacuum shattered. The white, indistinguishable faces rushed forward to bend over Maloney. Time began to run again, the hurrying rhythm of Bob's footfalls marking a frightened pattern of seconds. Outside, there was no other sound in the late night's silence but those diminishing staccato beats as he ran; from me, from Maloney, from everything.

They caught him, of course. Not right away. Not until after the inquest and the funeral were over, and the outraged respectability of the city had had time to be shocked and horrified and secretly delighted at the macabre excitement. It was the largest funeral in the city in years. The church was not nearly big enough to hold the horde of inquisitive spectators who came to stare. All of the local politicians were there, and for that day all the gambling houses and saloons were closed. The hearse wound its way down to the cemetery in the valley, followed by a mountain of flowers and a grotesque multitude that had emerged unexplained from every corner of the city, and trampled down most of the tombstones to get a glimpse of the body being lowered into the ground.

Afterward there was a period of waiting, not long, but seeming very long. There was no hope, only anxiety and a patient creeping despair. The whole city grew strange and unfamiliar to me, the very shape of the buildings seemed new and unknown. I paced the

pavements endlessly, watching winter form around the tops of the western mountains, while the wind blew cold along the streets and filled the air with a promise of snow. They brought Bob back one night, quietly, and locked him in the county jail. No one ever found out where he had been, not even I. It was a release from the strained and hopeless waiting, the kind of release that comes when long expectation of the worst has finally been realized. He was weary, beaten and resigned. He didn't talk, or plead, or ask for anything and rejected all offers of help. He only sat and stared into space and waited. We waited, too, all of us who had felt the same frustration and bitterness and monotony, but not in the same degree. We knew a little of his tired defeat.

Preparations for the trial went swiftly. From the day of Bob's capture the gambling houses and red-light district were locked and barred. The city cloaked itself with a ponderous and terrifying righteousness to preside at the administration of justice. The old granite of the court house became the focus of everyone's attention. It hummed all day long, from the time that the heavy doors swung open in the morning until the short gray twilight of early winter closed down. Crowds gathered in the corridors, mouthing and worrying each new scrap of information, squeezing and sucking it dry. Those of us who had seen the beginning and progress of everything watched with mild astonishment as these strangers sniffed about the cold stones for the vanished scent of blood long dried.

The trial began. It was only a matter of days until it became ap-

parent how hopeless Bob's position was. In a slow and solemn parade the witnesses took the stand. Policemen in their every day black suits. Bartenders, deferential and out of character. A varied and scattered assortment of waiters, poker players, bums. Inevitably the testimony mounted in an incriminating pyramid, lacking only a few pieces for its completion. Under the pressure of time some and irritating procedure the truth became a vague and vaporous thing, forever eddying and twisting away. The facts turned into mere forms, the substance gone, only the shape remaining. Murmuring voices in the dark-paneled room rambled on and on, tangling together something that had no relation to anything I knew or had seen, something which approached but never touched the events of that night.

Things had the shifting and disconnected aspect of a dream. Nothing was real; lethargy hung in the air and produced a curiously trancelike quality that lulled me softly and insidiously until it seemed beyond belief that any man's life was concerned by these proceedings. Only when some quick and bitter flare of tempers stirred the calm surface of the courtroom and sent whispers sighing along the rows of watchers did the icy shock of realization pierce my stupor, to tell me that Bob was trapped and that there was no escape.

I began to stay away from the court. I wandered around the old court house building for endless days, waiting. Occasionally I went outside and walked in the cold, returning every hour or so. I kept in touch through friends who stayed in court, and in this imperfect and sightless way fol-

lowed all the movements of the trial. That was how I watched Bob's lawyer gradually give up hope and begin looking for a way of having the sentence commuted to life imprisonment. In that way, too, I learned when the case was given to the jury. I was standing just outside the door of the courtroom when they filed back into the box and handed down a verdict of guilty.

Outside the snow was falling, big wet flakes that splashed and melted on the sidewalks and the shiny black pavements. The clouds had closed down, white and heavy with snow hanging just over the building tops, and obscuring all of the mountains and the valley. Automobiles splashed by on the wet streets, some of them with their lights burning, because it was beginning to get dark. On the worn stone steps of the courthouse the snow was forming soft white patches in the sheltered corners. The city, sloping away below, was coming sluggishly alive with a scattered flicker of lights and neon signs.

They found me waiting there on the steps when they came to tell me that the judge had sentenced Bob to life imprisonment. That meant, under the law, a minimum of twenty years before there was even a chance of parole. Twenty years. Almost as much time as we had lived. Over seven thousand days of eating, sleeping, walking and thinking. Twenty years that a man should use to work at a job, find a wife, build a home. I walked down the stairs into the snow and the gathering night. They had closed the last door on

Bob now, a heavy steel door, and they had him safe at last.

Tomorrow is Sunday. I'll get on a bus that will be filled with a holiday crowd of picnicking families because it is summer again and the skies are blue and the days are long. They'll be laughing, noisy and undisciplined. They'll sing and joke and change seats and spank the children, and accomplish everything with the greatest possible amount of fuss. I'll sit among them, quiet, alone, and lost.

The bus will drive a long way, through a high and lonely valley where the road winds like an asphalt ribbon through the sagebrush. It will be so quiet that the chatter of the picnickers and even the sound of the engine will be swallowed up in the silence and the mountains will look down, huge and blue and impenetrable.

Beyond that is the prison. I'll leave the bus there and a buzz of whispers will follow me down the aisle as I go.

I'll have to wait for a while outside, and when I get in I won't be able to stay long. I'll talk to Bob about things and people that are already strange and far away to him, but he'll listen eagerly, even though the words must be like an echo, distant and half-lost. My mind will rummage around, trying to think of all the things I wanted to remember, like the things you intend to put in a letter and can't ever recall. Then I'll have to go, in order to have time for the long trip home, and leave Bob to return to his cell and pace its floor, three steps by two, like a beast in a cage.

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